

# **The Ethics of the Ouiga-Board**

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**The Mischief of Spiritism  
The Drug Evil**

# **The Catholic Mind**

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# **The Catholic Mind**

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## The Ethics of the Ouiga-Board

JAMES F. BARRETT

THE ouiga-board is not unknown to us; some have played with it; a greater some have seen it used or at least have beheld it in the shop windows. In fact in many of our best-regulated households it has become part of the furniture and at sundry times on stormy evenings or dull afternoons, is brought into play for the amusement of the family or of their guests. Its contribution to the pleasure of the circle is innocent enough and only in extreme cases is its operation ever regarded seriously. Yet the pastime is not without its dangers and insidious consequences.

The ouiga-board is a form of the planchette. It consists of two parts; a board containing the alphabet and other characters and a much smaller board fitted with castors and a pointer, made to move easily over the alphabet-board when hands rest lightly upon it. It differs from the planchette in this: that the former reveals the answers to the questions propounded by spelling out the words when the pointer stops at the different characters painted on the board, whereas the planchette is fitted with an upright pencil which writes directly upon a sheet of paper, leaving an objective and appreciable evidence behind it.

Its method of operation is as follows: Two sitters face each other with the alphabet-board resting upon their knees. The smaller tripod is then placed thereon, with the hands of both subjects resting lightly upon it. Ques-

tions are then propounded and the small tripod begins to move in a manner independent of and unknown to the supposed operators, until it comes to a point directly over some letter or character where it stops, when it again moves to the next letter and so on until the complete message is spelled out. In planchette-writing the same procedure is followed, only with the somewhat different result that legible characters are formed upon the paper by the pencil. In the séance-room where a sensitive is sitting, direct writing may appear, independent of any communication with the sitters, on paper previously marked or on pieces of paper put into closed and locked drawers, or on the walls and ceiling of the room in which the séance is being held.

In the case of the ouiga-board, which is more popularly known, the results are no less startling than they are entertaining. The whereabouts of missing persons are sometimes revealed, though not in all cases accurately. Conditions that may exist at some future date are sometimes prophesied. Events that are taking place at some distant scene, that gravely concern the sitters or persons intimately associated with them are related with remarkable candor and accuracy. The writer has in mind an instance where two persons undertook a journey and were informed accurately from time to time by letter from those at home of their adventures. Such instances as this, however, are few and far between.

Now what is the explanation of these phenomena? Is a certain proportion of them due to the intervention of an intelligence which is of an independent and extraneous character, or may these phenomena be said to be caused by the operation of the subconscious or subliminal minds of those who are engaged in operating?

Psychologists agree that there are certain abnormal functions of the human mind which exist beneath the threshold of our ordinary waking consciousness. To quote Father Maher's "Psychology": "It should not be forgotten that besides the mental operations which reveal themselves in consciousness, there is much evidence to establish the existence of vital activities of which we are not at the time aware. . . . There is considerable dispute as to their exact nature and how their relation to the mind should be conceived. For the present it is sufficient to call attention to their reality and to remind ourselves that although unsusceptible of introspective observation, some of these activities are intimately connected with our conscious life." There would seem to be, beneath our ordinary daily consciousness, a secondary and far more mysterious process of mind-action, distinct from and independent of the primary one, as if there were two minds, each one performing its own particular and distinctive functions. In general terms the difference between the two minds may be stated as follows: The objective mind takes cognizance of the objective world. Its media of operation are the five senses. It is man's guide in all matters related to his physical environment. Its highest function is that of reasoning. On the other hand the subjective, or subliminal mind takes cognizance of its environments by means independent of the physical senses. It perceives by intuition. It performs its highest functions when the play of the senses is in abeyance. It sees without the use of the natural organs of vision, and at times, when a hypnotic subject is in a state of somnambulism, can be made, apparently, to leave the body, and travel to distant lands and bring back intelligence, oftentimes of the most exact and truthful nature.

Just how these two processes of thought and of mind-operation act upon each other, it is difficult to say. Certain it is, however, that in the vast majority of individuals the subliminal or subconscious mind is constantly under the control of the supra-liminal or conscious mind, and only manifests itself occasionally when the powers of this conscious mind are rendered inactive or the will held in abeyance. This often takes place in sleep, when thought and memories of long-forgotten scenes pass before our mental vision with sudden reality. This is true in reverie and day-dreaming when the ordinary mind is reduced to a condition of passivity or apathy. It is true in sickness, or disease or injury to the brain, when the most profound mental process is engaged in, and revelations of the most startling nature disclosed. It is true to a remarkable degree in hypnosis when the marvelous powers and possibilities of this subconscious mind-process is disclosed, and rendered capable of operation.

The action of the subconscious mind operating in obedience to suggestions received from and in conjunction with the minds of the sitters, and producing by a natural process all the appearances of an independent and intelligent personality, apparently accounts for the phenomena of the ouiga-board. Natural automatic action may explain the subliminal consciousness, drawing upon the information latent in some portion of the complex mental organism of the sitters, is the actual force that operates through the agency of the hands, apparently against the will of the operators and unknown to their conscious mind. According to Raupert in "Modern Spiritism", this may be the case when the information or knowledge conveyed can be shown not to transcend the knowledge possessed by the mind of the sitters, or when the general character of the communications is found to

correspond with their mental attainments. In cases such as these the phenomena may readily be ascribed to the abnormal mind-action of the operators which is basing its information upon that which is latent in the subliminal consciousness only and not remembered by the conscious mind.

This hypothesis is offered in favor of the solution of all spiritistic phenomena and also in explanation of the revelations of the ouiga-board, and although that practice is intended to be but an innocent form of amusement, nevertheless it must be classed with spiritistic phenomena and is therefore a form of Spiritism. But this subconscious-mind hypothesis does not cover phenomena by means of which information is conveyed which could not come within reach of the minds of the sitters at the time in question. Telepathy might account for some of them, but then one's brain would have to be the recipient of vibrations from any being at any place in the universe. For this reason scientists have discarded the subliminal-mind hypothesis, not in whole but as inconclusive, and have accepted the one known as the spiritistic theory.

Sir William Crookes, F.R.S., a leading authority on the subject of Spiritism, writes: "Whilst I have observed many circumstances which appear to show that the will and intelligence of the medium have much to do with the phenomena, I have observed some circumstances which seem to point conclusively to the agency of an outside intelligence not belonging to any human being in the room." He is writing here in regard to spiritistic phenomena in general of which direct writing, or planchette-writing and we might too include, the ouiga-board, are but a part. The arguments drawn in favor of this

theory are telling from the fact that it is the theory that is being adopted by science, that it is the simplest solution, and that it seems to explain all the phenomena and to cover the whole ground. It should be borne in mind, however, that a distinction should be made between the occasional manifestations of the dead, who sometimes communicate with the living according to laws and conditions unknown to us and who have in most instances a beneficial moral aim, for instance, by conveying warnings, or giving intimations of impending moral or physical danger, and between the modern spiritistic phenomena which take place in consequence and by reason of a conscious and deliberate human initiative, whose aim and effect are admittedly not always good and wholesome, and whose manifestations are often of an admittedly low moral character. Hence, according to this theory the manifestations that are made, the messages that are transmitted, the phenomena that occur are the work of outside unembodied intelligences. Which theory is the more plausible it is difficult to say. The latter has found favor with the scientific world, for the first President of the Society for Psychical Research, Professor Henry Sidgwick, writes: "Although I do not myself at present regard the theory of 'unembodied intelligences' as the only hypothesis which will account for known facts, I admit that it is the hypothesis most obviously suggested by some of these facts," and a Catholic investigator, J. Godfrey Raupert, in "Modern Spiritism" concludes: "Let it once be clearly and fully understood that, not abnormal mind-action, but extraneous spirit-intelligence lies at the foundation and is the source of a very large proportion of those occult manifestations so fascinating to inquiring minds, and for many such inquiring minds



the subject will at once assume a very different character, and considerations will present themselves which can scarcely fail to modify their entire attitude towards the matter."

The average person who simply plays with the ouiga-board and who steadfastly withholds all semblance of belief in its manifestations and power of control, will recoil in horror at the gravity of this theory. On the contrary, those who are more expert in the use of that uncanny implement, who call upon it with systematic fidelity at the threshold of all their undertakings, and who are continually under the influence and control of its insidious disclosures will readily admit that an intelligence and a chief control of some unknown and extraneous entity is the source if not the immediate active agency of its occult phenomena. They will explain this by merely recalling the ease with which a hypnotizer exerts his will on a subject, once the latter has allowed himself to be so controlled, for the subject's mind becomes an instrument so sensitive and so highly developed that images apparently foreign to the normal state of consciousness can be impressed thereon, and actions performed by him at the suggestion of the hypnotist have obviously all the characteristics of a definite objective reality. Substitute then an intelligence of a disembodied spirit, whose control over the operator may be effected in the same manner and all will be explained. Of course in both instances mind-passivity is absolutely essential. The hypnotist rejects those over whom he has no control on the ground that they are poor subjects; the outside intelligence is powerless over the unwilling and disobedient. Control can only be effected and *rapport* established between the two intelligent agents on the

sole condition that the mind of the sensitive is passive and open to all suggestions.

Whichever theory is considered the more worthy of acceptance it will be found fraught with equal dangers. If the subliminal-mind action or telepathic thought-transference were a fact, if the subconscious mind can be developed to such an extent that the mind of any other person in the world may be visited and the thoughts and aspirations concealed therein extricated at will, there would cease to be a single secret in the world and the most lamentable complications would be introduced into our moral and social life. There would result a state of confusion and anarchy whose gravity could not adequately be conceived. The ouiga-board would be the means of establishing the most intimate communication between the subconscious minds of men, even against the will of their conscious selves, and, as no man's thoughts or ideas or knowledge could be considered his own, the order of the world would be upset. Indeed, if it were possible to develop the powers of the subliminal mind to such an extent as the defenders of this theory contend in the explanation of such occult phenomena as planchette-writing and the like, difficulties and possibilities of the most overwhelming character would result.

On the other hand, the practice of allowing the mind to be completely at rest in order that it may open itself to the most faint suggestions, is one fraught with dangers, both physical and moral. Mind-passivity is the keynote of the spiritistic theory, the outside intelligences operating on the minds and wills of the sitters in the same manner as the hypnotist on the minds of his subjects. If this theory contains even the germ of truth which may account for the phenomena, then here too we

have a further motive for apprehension. For with the growth of these spiritistic practices, a steadily increasing number of minds must be laying themselves open to spirit-invasion and spirit-suggestion, and are only too readily paving the way for a habitual, though perhaps unconscious, control and obsession by some unseen and mystic influence. If such a theory is tenable then it is not at all improbable that the reason why so many minds go astray or become deluded from outside suggestions and promptings which have helped to fill our institutions and have puzzled our alienists, must be sought in the practice of continual mind-passivity. Further possible consequences of this practice can be conjectured from the fact that in the more developed forms of Spiritism, such as clairvoyance, intimate communication with the dead, luminous appearances, phantom forms and faces revealed to the sitters in the séance-room or on the photographic plate, the operating agents are for the most part, on their own admission and the general moral character of their manifestations or from the contradictory character of their teachings, intelligences of a low order "with low aims and desires and, in many demonstrated instances, with the deliberate intention and purpose of effecting the moral ruin of the sensitive."

Instances are recorded where the ouiga-board and the planchette have been the means of working untold harm. Dr. L. S. Forbes Winslow in "Spiritualistic Madness" as far back as 1877 wrote: "Ten thousand unfortunate people are at the present time confined in lunatic asylums on account of having tampered with the supernatural." He goes on to quote instances and records the fact that two French authors, "distinguished in their respective professions . . . [having] placed themselves in

communication with the spirits by means of tables, . . . died insane in an asylum." The case is also recorded of a "minister who took up automatic writing," and who, some six weeks after he began the practice, was haunted by the spirits themselves, with the result that he died raving mad in "the Bridgend Asylum" at the end of three months. A lady wrote that she "tried planchette with her girl friends, and grew every day more and more excited about it," but eventually was obliged to struggle a great deal before she was able to rid herself of its sinister influence. And there is a famous case on record in this country, at the present time, of a woman, who became so affected by the use of the ouiga-board that she is now compelled to spend her days in an institution for the insane. There is justification, then, for the contention, that whatever be the theory or the *modus operandi* of such phenomena, the field is one covered with insidious snares and pitfalls which point in the end to destruction and ruin.

From the standpoint of morality and ethics, such occult practices, performed deliberately and sincerely, fall under the head of divination and are mortal sins. Frequently, however, they are only venial offenses, because of the fact that they who indulge in them, do not place implicit belief in the revelation of the future by such methods, and employ them oftentimes as a joke or out of curiosity. The immorality of the practice consists in the use of them for occult purposes with a sinful end in view, and under this caption is included all forms of crystal-gazing, table-turning and the use of the planchette or ouiga-board, when by such means the operators seek to discover what it is certain none of them know, either consciously or unconsciously. Such practices are de-

clared specifically in Holy Scripture to be hateful to God; for we read in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, verses ten to twelve: "Neither let there be found among you any one that shall expiate his son or daughter, making them to pass through the fire; or that consulteth soothsayers, or observeth dreams and omens, neither let there be any wizard, nor charmer, nor any one that consulteth pythonic spirits, or fortune-tellers, or that seeketh truth from the dead. For the Lord abhorreth all these things, and for these abominations He will destroy them at thy coming."

Throughout the ages, moreover, this has been the teaching of the Church, solicitous as she is for the welfare of her children, and careful to warn them against what is harmful. And such a position she finds well authenticated by the passage of the Sacred Text quoted above, by the plain words of Christ as they are recorded in the pages of the Scriptures, by the teachings of her Apostles and Fathers and Doctors, and by facts carefully observed and studied throughout the centuries of her experience. But at the same time she has exercised the greatest care and the most prudent judgment in regard to the value of these phenomena, for with the same breath that she condemns the false and morbid mysticism, she recognizes and approves of the true and healthy.

Because of the compelling fact that many are accustomed to enter upon experiments with the supernatural, through the instrumentality of the ouiga-board or the planchette or various other practices, solely for the mere amusement of it and with no sense of the seriousness of the undertaking or of the responsibilities which are being incurred, the Catholic Church has seen fit, in a recent decree, to forbid her children taking any

part in spiritistic séances of any kind. In a decree of the Congregation of the Holy Office, dated April 24, 1917, attendance is forbidden "at any spiritistic communications or manifestations whatsoever," irrespective of the purpose in view, "whether in the capacity of an active participator or merely as an interested spectator." The reasonableness of this prohibition is apparent from the fact that activities of this nature are becoming day by day a graver source of moral peril to society. For with the practice of the many forms of mind-passivity, of which the ouiga-board is but one, the doors are continually being opened, which give an intimate and perilous access to the spirit-world, to the minds and souls of unwary men. In numerous instances this leads to the loss of all religious faith and to the moral and mental undoing of the victims.

Hence any participation in such performances is not permitted, not only because of the dangers, physical and mental that may lurk beneath them, but because of the cataclysm which yawns imperceptibly at their very feet. Such has been the implicit belief of the Church throughout her whole history; such is her explicit teaching now in the voice of her reigning Pontiff. For it has been her ordinances alone which, in the past, have succeeded in shutting out from men's souls those dangerous powers of darkness which have threatened to invade them, and it will be her ordinances alone which can do this effectively and consistently in the future. She has ever feared the powers of darkness, and she fears them now in these spiritistic practices, for, as St. Thomas says, the devil wishes to excite among men a greater curiosity about occult matters, in order that "being implicated in these

observances, they may become more curious and get themselves more entangled in the manifold snares of pernicious error."

### The Mischief of Spiritism

*From the "Bombay Examiner"*

THE Holy See has just forbidden participation in Spiritistic séances; and I suppose we shall soon have people talking of the Church's opposition to science as illustrated by this act. Be that as it may, one is glad to find that the spirit of the prohibition is backed up not only by Catholic investigators such as Raupert, but also by outsiders of such independent position as Dr. Crozier. This is what we take from the *Ave Maria* for April:

It was inevitable that a book by so eminent a scientist as Sir Oliver Lodge, recording alleged communications from his dead son, should provoke comment and criticism. One of the most prominent critics, Dr. J. Beattie Crozier, discusses the matter at much length in a recent issue of the London *Fortnightly Review*, and says among other things:

"My main object in this article is seriously to warn the public to think twice, and again twice, before they embark on these perilous spiritualistic seas of speculation. . . . Let them beware; for three of my friends, men of eminence who really believe in Spiritualism, have told me that they have forbidden the very name of it, or any allusion to it, to be mentioned in their homes; have forbidden their wives and children to touch it, as if it were a thing accursed. And why? Because, not being

really known and explainable, it puts their minds on the rack: and by the 'black magic,' which is always a part of it, so often leads to insanity and death."

Pooh-poohing the idea that there is anything else than human fraud and trickery in Spiritism is a convenient way of disposing of the subject; but it is so far a dangerous way that it may lead the unwary to meddle with spiritistic practices, a course that cannot fail to affect them injuriously sooner or later, somehow or other.

The text of the Decree of the Holy Office, dated April 27, 1917, runs as follows: "Question.—Whether it is allowable, through a medium, or without a medium, with or without the aid of hypnotism, to take part in (*assistere*) spiritistic conversations or manifestations of any kind, even where they have the appearance of propriety and piety; either by making inquiries of souls or spirits, or listening to their answers, or merely looking on—even under the tacit or express protest of intending to have nothing to do with *evil* spirits? The answer is in the *negative, all round*."

What convinces us that there is a decidedly preternatural element in Spiritism is the amount of scientific acumen which has been expended on its investigation. Speaking roughly from memory, it is our impression that Spiritism gave the turn to the tide of materialism, and re-established in the scientific world the reality of spirit-existence over and above matter. The names of Wallace, Crokes and Sir Oliver Lodge spring up in the mind in this connection; and, though we have not followed the movement closely, we believe that the investigation of spiritistic phenomena on critical lines brought these and other men of scientific insight to the conclusion that neither trickery nor illusion nor personal



magnetism would account for the whole affair. There remained something in it unexplained, something of a higher order than matter and force, something witnessing to the existence of an unseen world of intelligence; and therefore bare materialism as an explanation of the universe was a failure.

*"Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes,"* of course. We do not like the means, but we welcome the conclusion. Catholic investigators like Raupert have done their share in similar research, and have come to the same conclusion. Eliminate fraud, eliminate delusion, eliminate abnormal but natural causes such as telepathy and personal magnetism, *"Il y a toujours un autre."* Something always remains accountable only by the existence and activity of spirit agencies in the unseen; though from their incoherency and extravagance it seems to be spirit gone mad. Good, well-ordered and orthodox spirit it cannot be; but evil, disordered and heterodox spirit it can be and must be; in theological language, either damned souls or the devil.

If this conclusion is sound, as it seems to be sound or at least evidentially unavoidable, another conclusion follows from it. Dealing in friendly intercourse with damned souls or the devil is just as much an act of disloyalty to God and to the Church as dealing in friendly intercourse with Germans at present is an act of disloyalty to the British Empire. On that ground alone the Church could forbid it. Nay, the Church need not forbid it afresh because it is already forbidden by the law of God and even by the natural law. The pernicious effects of dabbling in Spiritism on the souls and bodies of the dabblers would form a second reason, supposing the first were wanting. Even if Spiritism were

pure and undiluted humbug it is certainly most pernicious humbug, wrecking the nerves and brain and undermining the moral sense, and ending in ruin, spiritual and physical.

There is nothing so enticing to the curiosity or so seductive to the imagination as a *mystery hedged round by a prohibition*; and we are sure to have people hankering after spiritistic séances all the more morosely, just because the Church has put round them a hoarding and a barbed wire-fence. Catholics of scientific turn may think it a pity that they should be debarred from experimenting, only just to get evidence for themselves as to what Spiritism really means. Whether the Church may under any special circumstances give personal leave to an individual Catholic scientist for this kind of research we cannot say; the prohibition as it stands seems to exclude even this. But we need not be troubled about the matter. There are enough investigators outside the Church who make their researches known; and we may as well let them do our dirty work for us. As to the rank and file of Catholics, they also can satisfy their curiosity indirectly by reading the descriptions of séances which sporadically appear in the press. There happens to lie before us a specimen which, on the strength of its credentials, ought to be reliable. It is the testimony of an eye-witness and active agent, a French canon of the Church, fortified with the permission of his bishop. We must confess, however, that without this authentication we should unhesitatingly treat the account as a hoax—it is too, too, utterly absurd. Even now we feel disposed to think that the Reverend Canon is humorously “pulling the public leg.” Taking it seriously, however, for argument’s sake, we can only remark that the devil

is a bigger fool than we ever dreamt him to be. What an egregious ass he makes of himself, first prophesying in unequivocal terms on February 15, that the war will end in July, already a month past, and then boldly declaring his own Satanic identity! How can he ever expect anyone to trust him after this? After these observations, read it for yourselves; and you will conclude: If this is Spiritism, the less we have to do with it the better.

#### A SPIRITISTIC SÉANCE

On the 15th of February, 1917, desirous of obtaining more thorough and ocular demonstration upon a subject of which I have and on which I shall still treat, and duly fortified with special permission from my bishop, I assisted at the house of a friend at a séance of Spiritism.

Besides myself, there were three gentlemen and four ladies, very honorable persons well known to me. The three ladies who made the table turn were in absolute good faith. They would never have desired to give any impulse to the table. Besides they would not have been able to do so, for they never took hold of it, never struck it, never pushed it by the edge nor by the under part. They scarcely touched it with their hands extended above it and not joined one with another. Often, even contact did not exist; a sheet of paper, a piece of cardboard might have been slipped between their fingers and the table.

That table, which I examined carefully, was not a cheat—no wire, no magnet, no fraud. It was a little center-table of seventy-five centimeters in diameter, mounted upon a spiral column eighty centimeters high, terminated by a tripod.

Scarcely had these ladies laid their hands on the table when it began to move. One gentleman said to it:

"Will you speak? If it is yes, rap once. If it is *no* give two strokes."

The table rose a little, and struck one sharp stroke—yes.

"Had Canon Coubé, who is present, a right to give conferences on Spiritism and Theosophy?"

"Yes."

"Are the Spiritists and the Theosophists going to answer him?"

"Yes."

"In a conclusive manner?"

"No." (Two quick strokes).

Then I said: "Let us speak of the war. Will France gain the victory?"

"Yes."

"Will the war end this year?"

"Yes."

"Before the first of November?"

"Yes."

"Before the first of August?"

"Yes."

"Before the first of July?"

"No."

According to that, the war will end in the course of July, 1917. One of the gentlemen said:

"Will you repeat to us which month will end the war, by striking some blows representing the month of the year?"

It struck seven blows, which still brings us to July. Thinking of one of my friends whom the war had surprised in Syria, and from whom I had not had letters since the first of September, 1914, I said:

"Is he of whom I am now thinking alive?"

"No."

"What! He is dead?"

"Yes."

"Killed by the Turks?"

"No."

"Of what did he die?"

The table answered by striking strokes whose number corresponded with the letters of the alphabet:

"Sickness."

"What sickness?"

"Malarial fever."

I proposed the same question about a soldier of Salonica

from whom I had received a letter toward the end of December. The response came that he died of the same fever. At the present moment I am altogether ignorant whether these two answers are true or false. As for my friend of Salonica, I shall soon know; about him in Syria, I shall, without doubt, know only at the end of the war. If the fact is true, there will be letters.

"Tell me the name of the officer who signed my papers."

"Vaillant."

"What is the initial of his Christian name?"

"R."

The young man drew from his note-book a folded paper which he handed to me. It was his leave of absence and it was indeed signed R. Vaillant. He asked again many details of his regiment, the names of its major and several of his comrades. The table answered very exactly some things known to him alone. He was stupefied and very much affected.

One of the gentlemen took his seat at the piano and played the waltz "*Flots Lléus*." The table began to waltz in perfect time. The ladies had to move around in order to keep in touch with it, but it glided out of their hands.

"Come down on the floor."

It came gently without falling. The ladies had to lower their hands in order to follow it, barely touching it superficially, but without holding it or retaining it. At last it touched the floor, but half under another large table. We wondered how it would disengage itself.

On the invitation we gave it, it glided a little backward, then quickly raised itself alone, for hands scarcely touched it. To raise a table, it should evidently be grasped by the edge or by a foot. But nothing of the kind here. This table readjusted itself spontaneously. The hand touching was then but a sign, a ceremony, but not an efficient cause.

Now we laid a chaplet [rosary] on it. At once, its movements became violent and disorderly until it had thrown off the object so odious to it. Then it calmed down gradually. Someone said:

"Are you a spirit?"

"Yes."

"Are you the demon? Are you Satan?"

"Yes."

We looked at one another a little questioningly. After a few seconds, I begged the soldier to place the chaplet on it again. Once more it danced around with extreme violence. One would have said that a furious animal was trying to disengage himself from a dart buried in its flesh. It gave blows right and left, bumping up against persons, chairs, walls, until the chaplet fell off. The hand of one of the ladies was caught between the table and a piece of furniture, and severely scratched. Then I said:

"So you are afraid of the Blessed Virgin?"

This brought out an explosion of wrath. It began moving with great rapidity. One of the ladies who was seated caught it and tried to hold the foot between her knees to prevent its movements. But impossible. She then seized it in her arms, grasped it with her hands to arrest it. It made violent efforts to disengage itself from her embrace, snatched itself from her arms, and struck her in the breast.

I approached it in my turn, leaned upon it with all my weight to stop its movements, used all my strength. I felt it trembling and trying to cast me off. It struggled again for some instants, but appeared conquered. Straightening up, I said to it firmly and authoritatively:

"Yes, you are afraid of the Blessed Virgin. She conquered you. She is all-powerful and she fears you not."

I thought it wanted to strike me in the face and recoiled a little. Escaping from the control of the ladies, it began to walk over me. The soldier tried to stop it, but it jumped and fell again in a fury. At last, one of its bounds was so violent that one of the feet of the tripod was broken and fell on the floor. The break was clean cut from the wood. The soldier tied it up with cord as well as he could, and set it on its feet again. We questioned it:

"What makes you so furious?"

It began to walk toward me, swaggering violently from right to left like a person intoxicated. I retired to the lower end of the apartment. It followed and ran up against me. I went to the opposite end. It came after me, passing around a chair.

We still put to it many questions to which it answered

with great precision. It was very calm when the others interrogated it; but after what I had said about the Blessed Virgin, it wanted to say nothing more to me. It reeled right and left as soon as I opened my lips. I said to one of the gentlemen:

"Since it does not want to answer me, ask it whether William will not be the last sovereign of his family?"

He put the question, but the table became furious and would not reply.

"Then you are an enemy?" Again, fury! This was, I think, the last word or one of the last. My friends were worn out, impressed beyond anything I can say. "This is enough to set one crazy!" remarked one of them to me.

I followed all the details of this strange scene shaken to the depths of my being, but preserving my composure, for I felt that I was doing my duty with the approbation of ecclesiastical authority. I watched the attitudes and gestures of those around me. I repeat there was in it no machinery, no fraud. Not only could the ladies not push the table, but their hands, of which I never lost sight, skimmed a little above the surface, and sometimes the table escaped from them. Still more, several times they tried to retain it, but without success.

There is no natural explanation for these phenomena. I look upon the idea of a fluid as pure childishness. A gaseous fluid disperses uniformly in the atmosphere without displacing any object. It is the same with a radio-active fluid, if it is not confined, canalized, directed upon some determinate point. And then, too, a fluid is not sentimental. It does not become furious against the Blessed Virgin. It does not disclose hidden things, any more than known things.

My absolute and rational conviction, is that it was a demon who animated that piece of furniture and spoke to us by its movements. I can find no better term to convey my impression than that which I employed above: one might have said it was *an animal* that was moving, walking, and leaping. All went on as if there was a soul in the table.

### The Drug Evil

THE discovery of the amazing growth of the drug habit in New York city, and the threatening danger that it may become a national evil, is alarming but not surprising. It is believed that there are some 200,000 hopeless drug-addicts in the metropolis alone. Among them are judges, physicians, lawyers, ministers and even mere boys. "I remember," affirmed Dr. Bishop, the gentleman in charge of the narcotic wards on Blackwell's Island, "when victims sent to us were men, some of them aged, but now they are chiefly young men and boys."

These revelations indicate a serious and shocking moral bankruptcy far too prevalent to be viewed lightly. But is this condition at all surprising? For many years past self-restraint has been held in small esteem both at home and in the school. Our children have been trained by precept and example to the easier way, and the only reliable stays against temptation, the Divine sanctions so frequently and emphatically urged by Christ, have been recklessly replaced by a fatuous code of "social ethics" neither better nor worse than the passions which gave it birth. As a consequence our boys and girls shrink from struggle and pain, and pursue pleasure with an abandon that reckes nothing of ways and means and gives no thought to consequences. The music of the fiddler must tremble in their ears incessantly, otherwise they are unhappy, and they insist on a quest for new experiences, regardless of the proprieties, if not of the very decencies of life. Even the leaping fire of passion has no terror for them, but what careless moth flitted in and out a flame and did not finally leave its charred remains below, symbol of a ruined soul?



Sad to say this scorn of abnegation is a national trait that betrays itself in most diverse ways. A great many of the statutes that roll out of our capitols in huge bundles are witness to the fact that legislators sense the evil and have come to the vain conclusion that men can be dragooned into virtue, coerced like oxen, driven like sheep, the while their hearts are untouched by the breath of God. This perhaps is the most discouraging feature of the problem. For if the leaders in Israel are blind to the true inwardness of the evil, what can be expected of men of smaller vision, who, though ready to throw their sweaty night-caps high in air, will not follow on? Nothing except contempt for prohibition and for injunctions against traffic in drugs and women and so forth. It is the heart of the citizen that enforces law, not the club of the officer nor the sentence of the judge. And until parents and teachers and statesmen recognize this simple fact and promote moral training through religion, the liquor-problem, the drug-problem and all other problems that turn around sin will remain completely unsolved.

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